

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 7/7/08 has been entered.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-54 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.
4. Claims 1-54 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wason in view of Danielsen (7171448) and Bittinger (5754774).

Regarding claim 1, the claimed "system for synchronizing playback of media content with other content or with host computer time information" is met as follows by

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Wason: The claimed "web browser for providing a timing representation to a media player" is met by the web browser discussed in column 2, lines 29-31, which contains a plug-in media player and a SAL (synchronization Abstraction Layer) API to send timing information from the browser to the media player (discussed below).

The claimed "media player including a first interface for object management and a second interface for exchanging timing and synchronization information with the web browser" is met by the RealVideo object 302 which creates a window for viewing media objects [col. 5, line 55] and the interface for passing the time and current information from the player to the SAL (Synchronization Abstraction Layer) 310 API of the browser [col. 5, lines 59-65].

The claimed "player-hosting peer within the web browser for negotiating a playback state and a rendering status between the web browser and the media player" is met by the SAL (Synchronization Abstraction Layer), which functions as a synchronization interface for the web browser and media player to communicate through [col. 2, lines 26-41].

The claimed "media players and web browsers, each having different notions of time, while displaying multiple disparate types of content that are incorporated into a single document", is met by the teaching where arbitrary data types (text chat, graphics, video, audio) are synchronized [col. 2, lines 45-50, lines 65-67] and integrated with streaming multimedia.

Wason does not disclose:

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A web browser and not a media player configured to provide timing representations;

a plurality of media players, each of the plurality of media players exchanging, without user input, command and state change information between the web browser and each of the plurality of media players.

In an analogous art, Danielsen teaches a plurality of media players, each of the plurality of media players exchanging, without user input, command and state change information between the web browser and each of the plurality of media players (col. 14, lines 15-25, lines 32-45, col. 15, lines 40-45, col. 18, lines 28-33).

At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious for one skilled in the art to combine the plurality of media players as used in Danielsen, an analogous art, with the media synchronizing system of Wason in order to automate the step of exchanging information, thereby not requiring user input.

However, Wason and Danielsen fail to teach:

A web browser and not a media player configured to provide timing representations;

In an analogous art, Bittinger teaches wherein a web browser is configured to provide timing representations (col. 4, line 52-col. 5, line 11);

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's invention to modify Wason and Danielsen's invention to include the above mentioned limitation, as taught by Bittinger, for the advantage of providing synchronization of devices.

Regarding claim 2, the claimed "player-hosting peer issues commands to each of the plurality of media players" is met by the SAL calling the RealPlayer plug-in and sending time updates to the media player in order to keep the two synchronized [col. 5, line 63-65].

Regarding claim 3, the claimed " each of the plurality of media players notifies the player-hosting peer of state changes" is met by the media player sending the current time to the SAL for synchronization purposes when seeking or performing other functions [col. 6, lines 6-7].

Regarding claim 4, the claimed "second interface includes a playback state and a current playback time passed from each of the plurality of media players to the web browser" is met by the RealPlayer periodically calling SAL (within the browser) with the current time and synchronizing information (such as the node of the table for presenting a TOC window that is synchronized with the video) [col. 5, lines 59-65].

Regarding claim 5, the claimed " each of the plurality of media players and the player-hosting peer jointly maintain the playing state and the current playback time" is met by SAL and the RealPlayer continually being updated with current time information

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in order to keep them synchronized [col. 5, lines 54-65].

Regarding claim 6, the claimed "second interface includes web browser time information and/or application time information passed from the web browser to each of the plurality of media players " is met by the ability for the SAL to keep the current time and call the RealPlayer with time updates [col. 5, lines 63-65].

Regarding claims 7-34, the claimed "player-hosting peer transitions through states including inactive, active, waiting for data, and out of sync" and the "transitions", "notifications", and "passes" that take place in the player-hosting peer and the media player are met by the inherent states of the SAL and the media player within the browser. As discussed in column 5, line 54 - column 6, line 23, the SAL and the media player are periodically calling each other and communicating state and time information between each other, in order to keep the SAL and the media player synchronized for the purpose of presenting synchronized information along with the media being played in the media player. For example, RealVideo and RealTOC are both synchronized to the current time of the RealPlayer. All of the passing from state to state is accomplished, though it may be inherent, it is accomplished by the passing of data between the SAL and the RealPlayer. The start, stop, seek, fast forward, and rewind commands are all discussed thoroughly throughout the cited section [col. 5, line 54 -col. 6, line 23].

Regarding claim 35, the claimed "web browser is operating in a television set top environment" is met by the mention of the fact that a set-top box can be used to implement this invention [col. 2, line 19].

Regarding claim 36, the claimed "other content includes advertising or other commercial content synchronized with at least one portion of the media content" is met by the advertising that can be integrated and synchronized with streaming media such as video and audio [col. 2, lines 49-50].

Regarding claim 37, the claimed "proxy layer for passing synchronization information or commands or both synchronization information and commands between the browser and an external media player" is met by the fact that the SAL functions as an API and acts as an interface between the browser and RealPlayer [col. 2, lines 27-41]. The SAL functions independently of the underlying framework, which is exactly what a proxy does. The plug-ins do not interact directly with the browser framework, but instead interact through the SAL.

Regarding claim 38, the claimed "player-hosting peer implements an interface for providing access to timing information from the player-hosting peer" is met, again, by the SAL, which synchronizes itself and the plug-ins with the time-line of the underlying framework [col. 2, lines 27-42]. As can be seen on column 5, lines 54-65, the SAL provides the plug-ins and the browser with timing information.

Regarding claim 39, the claimed "method of synchronizing playback of media content with other content or with host computer time information" is met as follows by Wason:

The claimed step of "providing, by a web browser, a timing representation to each of a media players" is met by the web browser discussed in column 2, lines 29-31, which contains a plug-in media player and a SAL (synchronization Abstraction Layer) API to send timing information from the browser to the media player (discussed below).

The claimed step of "providing a first media player interface for object management and a second media player interface for exchanging timing and synchronization information with a web browser" is met by the RealVideo object 302 which creates a window for viewing media objects [col. 5, line 55] and the interface for passing the time and current information from the player to the SAL (Synchronization Abstraction Layer) 310 API of the browser [col. 5, lines 59-65].

The claimed step of "issuing commands from the web browser to each of the plurality of media players, the commands being directed to media player operations other than, and in addition to, instantiation of the plurality of media players; and notifying the web browser of media player state changes" is met by the SAL (Synchronization Abstraction Layer), which functions as a synchronization interface for the web browser and media player to communicate through [col. 2, lines 26-41]. The initiation of the media player is met by the creation of the RealVideo object 302 [col. 5, lines 55-56] and

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the notification is met by the communication that takes place between the SAL and the media player [col. 5, lines 59-65].

The claimed step of “issuing commands including coordination command among the web browser and the plurality of media players, each having different notions of time, while displaying multiple disparate types of content that are incorporated into a single document” is met by the teaching where arbitrary data types (text chat, graphics, video, audio) are synchronized [col. 2, lines 45-50, lines 65-67] and integrated with streaming multimedia.

Wason does not disclose:

A web browser and not a media player configured to provide timing representations;

a plurality of media players, each of the plurality of media players exchanging, without user input, command and state change information between the web browser and each of the plurality of media players.

In an analogous art, Danielsen teaches a plurality of media players, each of the plurality of media players exchanging, without user input, command and state change information between the web browser and each of the plurality of media players (col. 14, lines 15-25, lines 32-45, col. 15, lines 40-45, col. 18, lines 28-33).

At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious for one skilled in the art to combine the plurality of media players as used in Danielsen, an analogous art, with the media synchronizing system of Wason in order to automate the step of exchanging information, thereby not requiring user input.

However, Wason and Danielsen fail to teach:

A web browser and not a media player configured to provide timing representations;

In an analogous art, Bittinger teaches wherein a web browser is configured to provide timing representations (col. 4, line 52-col. 5, line 11);

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's invention to modify Wason and Danielsen's invention to include the above mentioned limitation, as taught by Bittinger, for the advantage of providing synchronization of devices.

Regarding claim 40, the claimed "second media player interface includes a playback state and a current playback time passed from each of the plurality of media players to the web browser" is met by the RealPlayer periodically calling SAL (within the browser) with the current time and synchronizing information (such as the node of the table for presenting a TOC window that is synchronized with the video) [col. 5, lines 59-65].

Regarding claim 41, the claimed "each of the plurality of media players and the web browser both maintain the playing state and the current playback time" is met by SAL and the RealPlayer continually being updated with current time information in order

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to keep them synchronized [col. 5, lines 54-65].

Regarding claim 42, the claimed "second media player interface includes the host computer time information passed from the browser to each of the plurality of media players " is met by the ability for the SAL to keep the current time and call the RealPlayer with time updates [col. 5, lines 63-65].

Regarding claims 43-51, the claimed "notification" and "receiving and passing commands" steps are met by the inherent states of the SAL and the media player within the web browser. As discussed in column 5, line 54 - column 6, line 23, the SAL and the media player are periodically calling each other and communicating state and time information between each other, in order to keep the SAL and the media player synchronized for the purpose of presenting synchronized information along with the media being played in the media player. For example, RealVideo and RealTOC are both synchronized to the current time of the RealPlayer. All of the passing from state to state is accomplished, though it may be inherent, it is accomplished by the passing of data between the SAL and the RealPlayer. The start, stop, seek, fast forward, and rewind commands are all discussed thoroughly throughout the cited section [col. 5, line 54 - col. 6, line 23].

Regarding claim 52, the claimed "other content includes advertising or other commercial content synchronized with at least one portion of the media content" is met

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by the advertising that can be integrated and synchronized with streaming media such as video and audio [col. 2, lines 49-50].

Regarding claim 53, the claimed "at least one of the media players is external to the browser" is met by the fact that the RealPlayer software can act as a plug-in to the web browser [col. 1, lines 27-40].

Regarding claim 54, the claimed "step of providing a timing representation to each of the plurality of media players comprises the step of implementing an interface to provide access to timing' information from the web browser" is met, again, by the SAL, which synchronizes itself and the plug-ins with the time-line of the underlying framework [col. 2, lines 27-42]. As can be seen on column 5, lines 54-65, the SAL provides the plug-ins and the browser with timing information.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to SUMAIYA A. CHOWDHURY whose telephone number is (571)272-8567. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Fri, 9-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Miller can be reached on (571) 272-7353. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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